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Upcoming Luncheon Meetings



Date: September 11th
Topic: Keep on Talkin': Therapeutic Action in the Talking Cure
Speaker: John Wayne, PhD

Date: October 2nd
Topic: Identifying and Treating the Bi-Polar Spectrum Patient
Speaker: Mariel Tourani, MD

PLEASE RSVP NO LATER THAN THE FIRST MONDAY OF THE MONTH TO SGVPA VOICE MAIL (626)583-3215. CE credits available for psychologists, LCSWs and MFTs

Monthly luncheons are held on the first Friday of the month at the University Club,
175 N. Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, from 12:00 to 1:45 p.m.

Members Costs:

Luncheon, Service, and Parking Privileges...\$22
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Please note: Unclaimed lunch reservations will be billed to the individual--So please claim them!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hello SGVPA!

I hope these late summer weeks find you well, and refreshed for a plunge into the coming year!

As we face the fall, I am thrilled to welcome two editorial assistants, Christine Emanuel and Sheree Bailey, who will help me with the production of *Analyze This!* For the past 4 years, I have been privileged to act as the editor of this publication, and with the help of Mary Hannon (who formats each issue and coordinates advertising), have sought to make it increasingly relevant, readable, stimulating, and fun. Some of my "inspirations," however, require more time—and skill—than I have readily available! So you can imagine my delight that Christine and Sheree have now generously stepped forward to build the team, and ensure that our newsletter will continue improving.

On this subject, I do wish to pose you a question, however. SGVPA's Executive Committee is currently considering shifting the newsletter to an *internet format*. Many of you may not realize that in the last few years, SGVPA's membership has tripled. We now (excitedly) count almost 200 members in the area, and we are still growing.

By "going green" we could save literally thousands of dollars each year, since production and postal costs are among the biggest items in our budget. In an on-line incarnation, those of you who prefer the hard copy could still print out the newsletter to carry around with you... Still I realize that the notion of changing to an online version is evoking passions among some of those folks who are aware of it! So please write me a "letter to the editor" if you feel strongly about whether we should, or should not, *go green!*

(continued on page 2)

Remember What You Learned!

A Response

By John Wayne, PhD



My friend Alan Karbelnig has succeeded in provoking thoughts, and a hopefully thoughtful response (not reaction) in me with his brief essay entitled, "Forget What You Learned" (July/Aug issue). While I am in complete agreement with his point about the danger of our biases interfering with our ability to hear something that our patients are speaking, I am in the camp of those who know that experience (especially our own analyses) can actually work to help us deal better with our biases than we are able when novices in this "impossible" profession.

In fact, I often joke that unlike professional athletes, we are not washed up at age thirty-nine, but just beginning to learn what our patients have to teach us. When I first began practicing (at that time) as a Marriage, Family and Child therapist, I was so concerned about a lack of expertise and knowledge that I tried to apply Jungian templates to everything I heard. I felt compelled to be able to say *something* sooner rather than later in order to establish my *bona fides* to my patients. In other words, my belief that my lack of expertise/knowledge could be compensated for by showing what I *did* know, dominated my clinical acts, with predictable results.

Since then, as I have studied Freud in his own words, then Freud as read by Lacan, then Lacan in his own words, and finally Lacan through the lens of those who have followed him, (e.g. Burgoyne, Miller, Soler, Apollon, Laurent, Fink, etc.) including, now, myself... I have discovered a theoretical approach that has helped me to leave theory at the door. As some wise person said, theory makes a good servant, but a poor master. But don't our patients teach this to us every session? And did not the experience of our own analyses teach us the distance between theory and the truth of the subject? Does this not begin with Anna O. demanding of Breuer that he shut up and let her speak?!

Moreover, psychoanalytic theory has taught me that my *ignorance* is one of my greatest assets in the clinical setting, and *not* a liability. When my patient says/asks, "You know what I mean?" and I respond truthfully, "No, I don't, please say more," I am actually doing my job as an analyst, which is to be clear about where the knowledge at stake in the clinical situation is actually located, and to get the patient to speak this unknown knowledge. Therefore, I propose that the ignorance of the experienced therapist/analyst is a better one than that of the novice.

So all that I envy of the young therapist or analyst is her or his youth.

My advice to all therapists and analysts is, nevertheless, the same as Alan's: listen carefully to what is said. I would only add: listen to what is *not* being said, as well.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(continued from page 1)

Meanwhile, please enjoy this issue! Some highlights:

- **Divorce Mediation: Sometimes a Great Notion!** Attorney Mark Baer explains the relative advantages of resolving divorce disputes through mediation. (p.3)
- **Building Careers Together!** Dr. Colleen Warnesky reports on the activities of our committee devoted to early career folks. (p.4)
- **A Response to Alan Karbelnig!** Dr. John Wayne presents a counterpoint to his colleague's viewpoint presented in the last issue. (p. 2)
- **Scientific Psychology and the Mystery of Personhood.** Dr. Karbelnig's most recent "obsessive rumination" addresses the sacred duty of the psychotherapist.(p.5)

Best Wishes,

Suzanne Lake, PsyD
President

Psychology and Family Law

By Mark Baer, Esq.



Now that I have had an opportunity to share with you the realities of the legal system, and the risks involved in demanding your “day in court,” I am going to address the use of mediation in family law matters. I also want to point out that mediation is only one form of collaborative law used to resolve matters outside of court.

By utilizing some form of collaborative law, the parties maintain control over the outcome. After all, a settlement can only be reached by *agreement* among the parties. If the parties are unable to reach an agreement on each and every issue at some point, they will then be forced to litigate the unresolved issues in court.

Mediation has been used by the Los Angeles Superior Court as a means of resolving child custody disputes since its inception in 1955. If the parties are involved in a custody dispute, mediation is *required*. In fact, a court will not make orders related to custody unless the parties have attempted to resolve their custody dispute through mediation. Court employees trained in resolving such disputes work with the parents in an effort to reach a custody agreement. This form of mediation is known as Conciliation Court. Attorneys are not permitted to participate in this process and the “mediators” advise the parties that they have the opportunity to reject any agreement entered into within 10 days or the morning before the Court hearing, whichever occurs first. What the “mediators” and many attorneys fail to explain to the parties is that if they timely reject the Conciliation Court Agreement, the judge will often inquire as to the reasons for the rejection of that agreement. Unless the rejection is based upon a significant incident that occurred since entering into the agreement, many judges will make a custody order that basically reinstates the terms of the original agreement, regardless of the rejection.

Many of the Los Angeles County courthouses utilize attorney mediators for the family law matters. Family law attorneys are asked to volunteer their time at a particular courthouse and are sent cases which the judge or commissioner believes are appropriate for mediation. As an example, I must point out that there are three family law courtrooms in the Van Nuys Courthouse, and that there are typically at least 20 matters set for hearing in each of those courtrooms on any given morning. However, it is rare for more than a three to five cases to be sent down to mediation at any given day. The reason that so few cases are sent to the mediator is that the judges and commissioners do not believe that every case is appropriate for mediation.

I have been volunteering as an attorney mediator on a rotating basis at the Van Nuys Courthouse since January of 2008. I have found that program to be a very effective means with which to resolve such legal disputes. To date, I have settled 100% of the matters that I have mediated as a volunteer for the at the Van Nuys Family Law Court. Those matters have involved custody/visitation disputes, spousal and/or child support issues, and requests for contribution toward attorneys fees. I have found mediating family matters so personally rewarding that in or about May of 2008, I completed a 40 hour training in mediation skills.

I tend to agree with those judges and commissioners that hold that mediation is not appropriate for every case. The parties and/or their attorneys must have a good faith desire to resolve their disputes in such a manner. I use the term good faith because I have found that in a family law situation, one party generally tends to be more aggressive than the other. I have also noticed that the more aggressive party tends to be the one pushing the idea of mediation and that the parties participate in mediation without legal counsel. It is important to note that a mediator cannot represent the interests of any particular party. In fact, the mediator’s job is to assist in resolving the legal dispute. If the parties are not represented by separate counsel and one party is more aggressive in the mediation, he/she may be able to put into effect a mediation settlement that is unfair to the other party through intimidation or just by “steam rolling over” the weaker party. Unfortunately, once the agreement is signed, it is almost impossible to set aside. While such a case may be resolved through mediation, if the agreement is unfair to the weaker party, I am not sure that I would consider the mediation to have been a success.

Often times, the parties participate in mediation without legal counsel, but the mediator recommends that each party

(continued on next page)

go over agreements reached with separate counsel before signing the agreements. While in theory this is a means of protecting the weaker party, the problem is that both parties are aware of the agreement that each was willing to make. If material changes are requested after consulting with attorneys, it is often difficult or impossible to make those changes because of the terms that were preliminarily agreed to by the parties, as mentioned above.

As a result, I believe that the “safest” form of mediation is where each party is represented by counsel throughout the process. Obviously, this is often not the case. I do not mean to convey that mediation cannot be effective unless each party is represented by counsel. However, the parties should exercise caution when mediating without separate counsel because of the risks involved.

If used effectively, a mediated resolution allows the parties to heal much sooner from their emotional wounds caused by the dissolution of their relationship. Mediation also enables the parties to delve into the underlying reasons they desire certain results and thereby allows for more creative resolutions that might accomplish those needs through means that are more palatable to the other party. However, it is a misconception that mediation is always a less costly form of dispute resolution. It certainly has its benefits, if used effectively. However, if the primary reason for utilizing mediation is cost savings, the parties may not use it effectively.

Although I mentioned that I have successfully mediated matters in short time frames, it must be noted that those resolutions were merely on issues set for hearing on a particular date and not on each and every issue involved in the case. Furthermore, the parties had spent time and money briefing those issues for the hearing and I was able to review and analyze the file and the both sides’ positions before commencing the mediation.

Mark Baer, Esq. can be reached at (626) 389-8929 or by email at mbaer@rrjlaw.com

What’s Happening with Early Career Professionals?

By Colleen Warnesky, PsyD
ECPC Chair



Colleen Warnesky, PsyD

The Early Career Professionals Committee was busy in the month of June. On June 19th we celebrated the newly licensed professionals at the home of Deborah Peters, PhD. The newly licensed professionals: Maggie Ateia, PsyD, Carrie Dilley, PhD, Joe Dilley, PhD, Valla Walker, MFT, and myself were toasted by members of SGVPA. We wish to honor all of you who become licensed so when you are licensed please inform either the ECPC or the Membership Committee. This is a huge step and the last of many for us, and you should be honored!

On June 24th, the ECPC sponsored a continuing education event on “Building Your Practice.” Drs. Linda Bortell, Alan Karbelnig, and Gabrielle Taylor presented to a group of 15 members regarding how to get your practice started, how to generate new referrals, ways to get to know others in the community, and how to balance your workload. Many in attendance found the information invaluable and noted that the speakers were knowledgeable and quite varied in their experiences. We hope to offer a continuing education event on this topic at least once a year, so look for announcements on the listserv and in the newsletter regarding this matter.

The next event for the ECPC will be a happy hour in September to welcome the new school year in and network with colleagues. We will announce this event shortly on the listserv, and Facebook page. Please join us on Facebook if you have suggestions, ideas or just want to see what the Early Career Professionals are up to...

Dr. Warnesky can be contacted at Drwarnesky@yahoo.com

Obsessive Ruminations

Privileging Individuality: The Psychotherapists' Sacred Duty

By Alan Karbelnig, PhD



Bolstered by Soren Kirkegaard's lament that "ours is a paltry age because it lacks passion," Dr. Alan Karbelnig writes this regular column to provoke thoughtful reaction from his SGVPA colleagues. He has been a member of SGVPA since 1988, and served as its president in the early 1990s. He has chaired the SGVPA Ethics Committee for 14 years. Alan is a Training and Supervising Psychoanalyst at the New Center for Psychoanalysis and the Newport Psychoanalytic Institute. He practices psychoanalytic psychotherapy and forensic psychology in South Pasadena.

If you view psychological conditions as distinct "disease" entities, then you likely appreciate the existence of cognitive behavioral psychotherapists. They develop skill in categorizing aspects of human experience that comport with DSM IV disorders. They identify empirically validated mechanisms for treating such psychiatric entities. They research and publish studies on the effectiveness of their interventions. But even the most conservative cognitive behaviorists would not consider their approaches to be holistic, to involve the "whole person." Instead, although they might use kinder words, they treat their patients like some variation of machines that, after some thought-adjustments, can be returned tranquilly to society.

Psychodynamic practitioners, in contrast, listen to the persons who consult them as whole beings, as sentient subjects. They realize that, whereas persons might seek help for "erectile dysfunction," psychotherapy sessions may uncover more global relational difficulties. They understand that, whereas other persons might present with "depression," the therapy encounters might reveal a profound disinterest in their life work, or previously unknown conflicts with their family or friends. Similarly, they might help persons with "anxiety disorders" discover that their nervousness betrays an insufficient sense of identity, meaning, or emotional security. All of these underlying subjective themes can become altered through the structured interpersonal process called psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

Despite their various inter-school conflicts, these psychodynamic practitioners share a focus on individuality. To one extent or another, they find guidance in the pursuit of what psychoanalyst and philosopher Jacques Lacan called the *subject* (who the person really is) rather than the *ego* (who the person *thinks* he or she is). This search for the *subject* is nothing less than a sacred duty, particularly in view of contemporary society's near-destruction of individuality.

This threat to distinct personhood becomes readily evident when watching late night television. As you have likely witnessed yourself, television commercials pawn

medications for every "ailment" – physical, mental, or cultural. They display actors showing a range of emotion, from sadness to nervousness to excitement to exhaustion; they then name these as depression, anxiety, mania, or fatigue; they then suggest that your doctor can provide you with the Lexapro, Xanax, Lamictal or Provigil to eliminate these "disorders."

The process of naming various mental states, and even identifying them as abnormal, begins in earliest childhood. We are inculcated into the mythology of our families – regardless of our true natures. If the family values education and we struggle academically, then we are sent to tutors, offered special remedial materials, and shuffled off to private schools. If mild, compliant behavior is sought, and we are intense by nature, then we are referred for special education, or perhaps given psychoactive substances to modulate our passions.

Once we leave the family home, we become immersed in a more intensive, all-encompassing propaganda program. The mass media encourages the atrophy of all critical thinking abilities. We are barraged with information defining our experiences. We are told what bodily smells are bad, what behaviors are problematic, and what habits are self-destructive. These mass informational campaigns severely damage individuals' capacity for finding themselves.

In contrast, psychodynamic psychotherapists focus more broadly on the search for individuals' desires, feelings, thoughts, attitudes, memories, and dreams. They help the individuals who seek their assistance to find the meanings contained therein. As such, these practitioners will always be ill-equipped to target "diagnostically regulated groups." They will always fit poorly into the evidence based medicine model. Their work towards the liberation of human individuality – ironically just like individuality itself – will never be subject to neat packaging comparable to "the little blue pill." While the clarion calls for scientifically-based approaches dominate the popular discourse, these professionals will quietly continue to pursue meaning and individuality – features of the human experience that defy categorization and therefore measurement.



MONTHLY PROGRAM SCHEDULE 2009

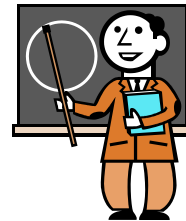
Date: November 6th

Topic: Sexual Addiction, Substance Abuse, and Eating Disorders
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Speaker: Peter Radestock, PhD

Date: December 4th

Topic: TBA



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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am writing to implore the SGVPA leadership to PLEASE keep the newsletter *Analyze This* in print form. In this age of disappearing print media, I think we should take the lead in ensuring that our little avenue of news -- local, personal, and helpful -- remains in a form that we can feel, see, and even read in the bathroom! Please raise the dues, increase the ad prices, or borrow from relatives to keep our lovely newsletter in paper form.

Signed,

Alan Karbelnig



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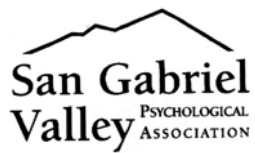
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